



Decision Memo
Front Country Trails Phase I
Pleasant Grove Ranger District, Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest
Utah County, Utah
December 2019

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document details my decision regarding the proposal to improve trails along the front county of the Pleasant Grove Ranger District.

Project number in the Planning, Appeals, and Litigation System database: 57253

General Location: Wasatch Front Foothills from the Point of the Mountain south to Provo Canyon.

2.0 PROPOSED ACTION

This project is needed to provide a sustainable network of non-motorized trails that provide the recreation opportunities that hikers, mountain bikers and equestrian users are seeking and to stop the expansion of illegally built trails. Additionally, the project will improve wildlife habitat and watershed quality by closing and rehabilitating the unsustainable and redundant trails that have been created by users.

There are three main aspects of this project:

1. First, by providing 21.46 miles of officially designated trails we will be creating a quality recreation experience that is defined and sustainable to the resources. The proposed trail system will include a combination of current trail alignments and newly added trails. Work completed on existing trails will include drainage improvements and tread and brushing of the corridor to meet Forest Service trail specifications. New trails align with five of the nine needs identified in the Pleasant Grove Ranger District trail plan. During project development newly added trails met one or more of the following criteria:
 - Complete missing sections of the Bonneville Shoreline Trail (BST)
 - Provide access from neighborhoods to the National Forest System
 - Provide easy or moderate trails
 - Create loops
 - Provide a riding opportunity to disperse users out of American Fork Canyon
2. Second, is to address the existing extensive network of illegal user created or old system routes. We will close 17.02 miles of illegal trails to educate users that additional trail construction is not allowed. A signed and designated trail system in this area will also help stop illegal trail building. Decommissioning of the illegal routes would improve watershed and discourage users from creating more social routes. Decommissioning activities will include grubbing the tread by hand, seeding, and using natural barriers such as brush and rock to close trails.
3. The third is to continue working to designate the BST through Utah County, provide connectivity to municipality and urban trail opportunities as well as provide connectivity to the trails on the Timpanogos Wildlife Management Area.

2.1 Design Criteria

- Archaeology- Contact forest archeologist to implement a phased approach to address National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 compliance for all phases of this proposed undertaking, as site specific treatments are currently being developed to address where to retain/improve and decommission trails. As the UWCNF develops trail specific treatments, the forest will consult with the Utah SHPO regarding the appropriate level of archaeological analysis in light of the type of proposed treatment, location, and potential for the presence of cultural resources. The agreed upon level of analysis will be accomplished prior to a trail designation as a system trail or decommissioning. In the event historic properties are identified as potentially being affected by the proposed undertaking, the potential for adverse effect(s) will be mitigated in accordance with 36 CFR 800.
- Fire/Fuels- Contact district fuels management officer prior to any decommissioning. Do not create piles of fuel from lop and scatter.
- Hydrology- If trails require construction of stream crossing structures, contact forest hydrologist for review and recommendations.
- Vegetation- Follow best management practices to prevent the spread of noxious and invasive weeds.

3.0 DECISION AND RATIONALE

My decision is to authorize the proposed action along with the required design criteria as described in section 2, above.

Based on environmental analysis and input from an interdisciplinary team of Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest resource specialists, I have determined that this action may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. In particular, this action falls under **36 CFR 220.6 31.2 (e)(1) - Construction or reconstruction of trails and 36 CFR 220.6(e)(20) - Activities that restore, rehabilitate, or stabilize lands occupied by roads and trails, excluding National Forest System roads and National Forest System trails to a more natural condition that may include removing, replacing, or modifying drainage structures and ditches, reestablishing vegetation, reshaping natural contours and slopes, reestablishing drainage-ways, or other activities that would restore site productivity and reduce environmental impacts.**

We consider resource conditions when determining whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action exist that warrant further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement. As per Chapter 30, Section 31.2 of Forest Service Handbook 1909.15, the mere presences of one or more of these resource conditions does not preclude use of a categorical exclusion. I have concluded that there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

4.0 SCOPING

In 2017 we began working closely with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Mountainland Association of Governments, RTCA of National Park Service, local municipalities and trail users. We held multiple public meetings and open houses to gather public input on what trails would be the most desirable to keep and what ones would make sense to close. We have also worked with them on trail use types and any potential one-way directional trail suggestions. From October 2017 to current we held 21 public meetings (advertised via Utah Valley Trails Alliance, Facebook, Front Country Partners, PG Trails email list, shared by local user groups and municipalities), 14 outreach events that reached 960 people, and 12 executive meetings for the land managers to discuss details of the project. Forest Service trail crew

employees then completed trail reconnaissance to determine if the routes were sustainable in order to add to the system.

The efforts of this planning resulted in the project proposal that was reviewed by an interdisciplinary team of forest service resource specialists and posted to the forest website.

5.0 FOREST PLAN AND LEGAL CONSISTENCY

The Forest Plan states that, "The Bonneville Shoreline Trail is managed to maintain its designation as a Millennium Legacy Trail." (page 5-18). The project proposal includes five miles of trail that will either become part of the BST for provide access to the BST. Additionally, the Desired Future Condition for recreation in the American Fork Management Area (page 5-18) emphasizes non-motorized activities due to wilderness and municipal watershed considerations.


I find that the proposed action is fully consistent with the 2003 Land and Resource Management Plan, Uinta National Forest, as well as in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. Specifically; the National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended; Clean Water Act; Congressional designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas, or National Recreation Areas; Inventoried Roadless Areas; Research Natural Areas; Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historical properties or areas; Migratory Bird Treaty Act; Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898).

6.0 OBJECTION OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

My decision is not subject to administrative appeal or objection, as outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 and the Agricultural Act of 2014. This decision may be implemented immediately.

7.0 CONTACT PERSON

For additional information about the project, contact Jentry Cataluna (jentry.cataluna@usda.gov), 801-796-4896.



Russell Hanson
District Ranger
Pleasant Grove Ranger District

12/16/19

Date

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